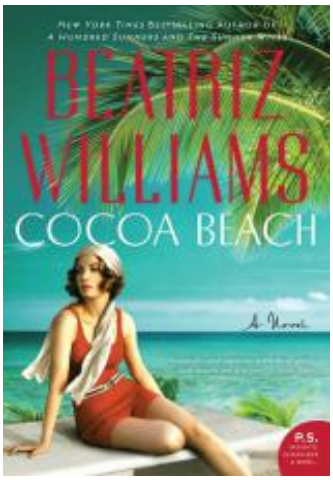
ReadingGroupGuides
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Cocoa Beach

by Beatriz Williams



About the Book

The *New York Times* bestselling author of A CERTAIN AGE transports readers to sunny Florida in this lush and enthralling historical novel --- an enchanting blend of love, suspense, betrayal and redemption set among the rumrunners and scoundrels of Prohibition-era Cocoa Beach.

Burdened by a dark family secret, Virginia Fortescue flees her oppressive home in New York City for the battlefields of World War I France. While an ambulance driver for the Red Cross, she meets a charismatic British army surgeon whose persistent charm opens her heart to the possibility of love. As the war rages, Virginia falls into a passionate affair with the dashing Captain Simon Fitzwilliam, only to discover that his past has its own dark secrets --- secrets that will damage their eventual marriage and propel her back across the Atlantic to the sister and father she left behind.

Five years later, in the early days of Prohibition, the newly widowed Virginia Fitzwilliam arrives in the tropical boomtown of Cocoa Beach, Florida, to settle her husband?s estate. Despite the evidence, Virginia does not believe Simon perished in the fire that destroyed the seaside home he built for her and their young daughter. Separated from her husband since the early days of their marriage, the headstrong Virginia plans to uncover the truth, for the sake of the daughter Simon never met.

Simon?s brother and sister welcome her with open arms and introduce her to a dazzling new world of citrus groves, white beaches, bootleggers and Prohibition agents. But Virginia senses a predatory presence lurking beneath the irresistible, hedonistic surface of this coastal oasis. The more she learns about Simon and his mysterious business interests, the more she fears that the dangers that surrounded Simon now threaten her and their daughter?s life as well.

Discussion Guide

1. At the start of the novel, Virginia reflects that ?The history of the past three years is as mysterious to me as the

mangroves growing on the opposite shore of the river.? Why is that? Has ignorance been bliss for Virginia?

2. What do we learn about Virginia during the flashbacks to wartime France? How does that affect the way we think of her, and Simon?

3. Were you surprised when Agent Marshall hints that Simon?s death was not ?a simple act of God?? Do you think Virginia was surprised?

4. What is the meaning of the note left for Virginia at Maitland that reads Everything you seek is here? Is it reassuring? Or menacing? Who do you think left it for her?

5. Why does Virginia choose to believe what Samuel tells her about Simon? Would you have fled back to America, as she did?

6. Why does Virginia?s father send Simon money once she?s returned to New York? What effect does that have on Virginia?s relationship with her father? What does it do to her feelings for Simon?

7. What do you make of Samuel? Why do Virginia?s feelings for him seem to waver between attraction, trust, and mistrust?

8. Were you surprised to learn the truth about Clara?

9. What do you think will happen to Simon and Virginia --- and their children --- in the years after this novel has ended? What do you think Agent Marshall?s sudden appearance on their doorstep means for them?

Author Bio

Beatriz Williams is the *New York Times*, *USA Today* and internationally bestselling author of HUSBANDS & LOVERS, THE SUMMER WIVES, THE SECRET LIFE OF VIOLET GRANT, A HUNDRED SUMMERS, the *Wicked City* series, and several other works of historical fiction, including five novels in collaboration with fellow bestselling authors Karen White and Lauren Willig.

A graduate of Stanford University with an MBA in Finance from Columbia University, Beatriz worked as a communications and corporate strategy consultant in New York and London before her first novel was published in 2012. Beatriz?s books have won numerous awards, have been translated into more than a dozen languages, and appear regularly in bestseller lists around the world. Her essays have appeared in magazines such as *Real Simple* and *Southern Living*, among others, and she regularly reviews fiction for the *New York Times Book Review*.

Born in Seattle, Washington, Beatriz now lives in southeastern Connecticut with her husband and four mostly grown children.

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